as against the stock in the corresponding period in 1995-96;

(c) the extent to which the shortage is against the buffer stock requirement; and

(d) the measures taken by Government to replenish the wheat stock to avoid wheat crisis?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA): (a) to (c) The estimated stock of wheat in the Central Pool as on 1st April, 1996 and 1997 and the minimum stock required to be maintained as per buffer norm are given below:—

(in lakh tonnes)

As on	Minimum buffer norm	Stock of wheat
1.4.1995	37.00	87.20 (P)
1.4.1996	37.00	77.62 (P)
1.4.1997	37.00	32.40 (P)

P- Provisional subject to revision.

(d) The measures taken by the Government to replenish the wheat stock include the following:—

(i) Decision to import upto 4 million tonnes of wheat during 1996-97 and 1997-98.

(ii) Increase in the procurement price of wheat during 1997-98 by Rs.95/- per quintal (including bonus) over the price paid during the previous year.

(iii) Making adequate arrangements for procuring all the quantities of wheat conforming to the prescribed specifications offered for sale by farmers at the procurement price fixed.

(iv) Decision not to allow any export of wheat and wheat products during 1997-98 and retain licensing and stock holding limits of wheat besides placing the wheat under Selective Credit Control.

FCI faces MRTPC probe for Rice overpricing

3722. SHRI YERRA NARAYANASWAMY: Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the news-item published in the "Business Standard", dated 28th November, 1996, captioned "Food Corporation faces MRTPC probe for overpricing rice";

(b) the details of the investigation;

(c) the status of the investigation; and

(d) the reaction of the Government?

THE MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Director General of Investigation & Registration (DGIR) has filed an application with the Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Commission (MRTPC) on the ground that the Food Corporation of India has overcharged the customers in the State of Kerala. The application of DGIR is based on the C&AG Report that the Food Corporation of India has overcharged the consumers by issuing lower group of rice in higher group in the State of Kerala. The C&AG has alleged that the Food Corporation of India has earned an amount of Rs. 418.71 lakhs and customers have been overcharged to that extent.

(c) The case came up for hearing on 2.5.1997. The MRTPC has now issued notice for 11th September, 1997.

(d) The case is subjudice.